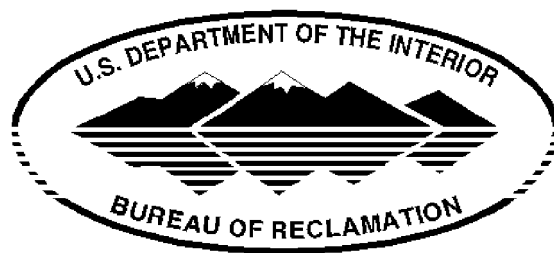


U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation

Customer Satisfaction Survey

a synopsis of process, results, and recommendations for a path forward





United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
RECLAMATION SERVICE CENTER
PO Box 25007
Building 67, Denver Federal Center
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007



July 1, 1999

Dear Customer:

Subject: Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Bureau of Reclamation completed a **survey** of its customers to determine their level of satisfaction with the goods and services the Bureau provides. It is our desire to deliver both consistent and efficient products and services to our customers. We seek to be responsive and create a partnership between our staff and our customers.

Reclamation appreciates comments submitted by you during our customer survey about our business practices, our communications, and our performance. Thank you for the innovative ideas that you have presented to assist us in improving our services to you.

Enclosed is a summary copy of our customer's survey findings. This Customer Feedback Report is available on Reclamation's internet web site at: **www.usbr.gov**. Select the feature arrow. Please review the report and provide any feedback you may have to: **response@do.usbr.gov**. Your comments will be considered as we continue to improve Reclamation's services to the public.

Sincerely,

Eluid L. Martinez
Commissioner

Attachment

U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

Customer Satisfaction Survey

a synopsis of process, results, and recommendations for a path forward

The Bureau of Reclamation has recently completed a survey of its customers to determine their level of satisfaction with the goods and services the agency provides. In the following pages we describe the survey process, discuss the issues customers raised, and present a plan for meeting customers needs.

Why We Surveyed Our Customers

Like other water management agencies, we sit on the threshold of change, currently underway in western water development and use. As the era of infrastructure development subsides, the challenges of finding effective, more efficient ways of using limited water resources increases.

Increased customer service is underway in the federal government, driven by the National Performance Review and the Government Performance and Results Act. Good customer relations has always been a goal of Reclamation, and we gained valuable information from this survey. Customers and partners have indicated a strong desire to be more involved in Reclamation's decision making, and want their concerns heard and acted upon. They have given us specific ideas on how to improve relationships and have suggested increased direct contact. Our challenge is to better understand their needs and incorporate them into agency actions, while at the same time considering competing demands that influence Reclamation's programs.

Reclamation's mission places increased emphasis on other than traditional activities in the management of the West's water resources, but we continue to recognize the importance of our water delivery responsibilities and the value it brings to our customers. With that in mind, we set out, in late 1997, to survey our customers to find out what their needs and concerns are, and to use the findings in the design of a customer-friendly program of service. Our Customer Satisfaction Survey is an integral part of our Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 1997 – 2002. Strategy 15 of the Plan identified the need for such a survey, which is consistent with Presidential Executive Order 12862, which encouraged federal agencies to survey their customers to determine their needs.

Survey Design and Methodology

The first question we asked was "who should be surveyed?" Our 1994 Customer Service Plan identifies three basic groups with an interest in Reclamation's services:

- < Customers – those individuals or entities that use or receive products, services or information that results from the processes Reclamation performs,

- < Partners – those groups, agencies, or entities that jointly assist Reclamation to serve its customers, and
- < Stakeholders – interested parties who do not receive services directly.

Who We Surveyed

We surveyed our customers and partners because these groups participate directly with us in our delivery of goods and services. Stakeholder input will be sought separately.

In reviewing lists of constituents, we identified about 9,900 individuals and entities that qualified as either customers or partners. In designing the survey, we first sorted these individuals and entities by Bureau of Reclamation regional office boundaries, and then used a sampling technique to select participants. This procedure was designed to ensure that there would be a statistically high level of confidence that the results obtained accurately reflected the opinions of our customers.

The survey was sent to 3,011 customers and partners. We received 835 responses, representing a 30% response rate. We believe this response is adequate to provide useful information on customers' perceptions of our service.

Survey Results

We asked you to rate or comment on our performance in four general areas by responding to 19 questions: 15 closed-ended and 4 open-ended. The four general areas of performance to be evaluated were:

- < ***Doing Business with the Bureau of Reclamation*** – how well does Reclamation meet your needs;
- < ***Assessing the Bureau of Reclamation Staff*** – what has been your experiences in dealing with staff;
- < ***Evaluating the Bureau of Reclamation's Performance*** – looking at 14 different program areas; and
- < ***Your Ideas*** – an opportunity for you to make suggestions on how Reclamation could improve its performance.

Your Level of Satisfaction With Our Customer Service:

We were pleased to learn that overall you feel we are doing a good job. Consistently, more than half, and in some instances up to 80% of you rated our performance as good to excellent. Some of you took the time to individually name 51 employees who provide excellent service. In addition, you referenced numerous individual offices or types of staff that provided excellent service.

In “Doing Business with Reclamation” you were asked first to respond to seven statements generally dealing with the ease of doing business with Reclamation. Figure 1 shows your responses to these questions.

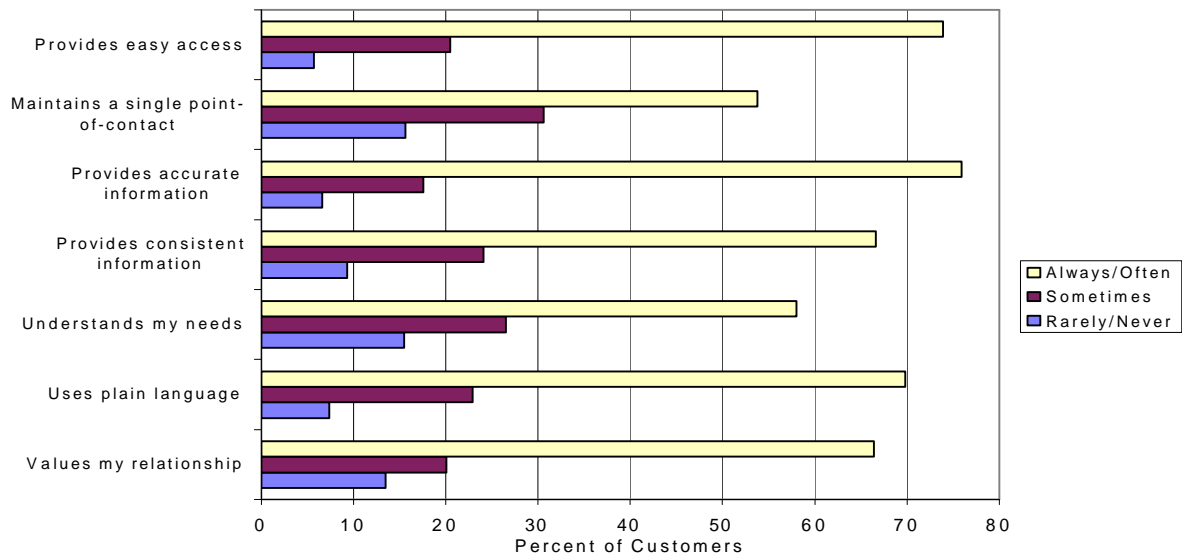


FIGURE 1 Customers’ Assessments of How Reclamation Interacts with Them

You were also asked to tell us how you felt about how we ask for, and include your ideas in our decision-making. Figure 2 shows your responses.

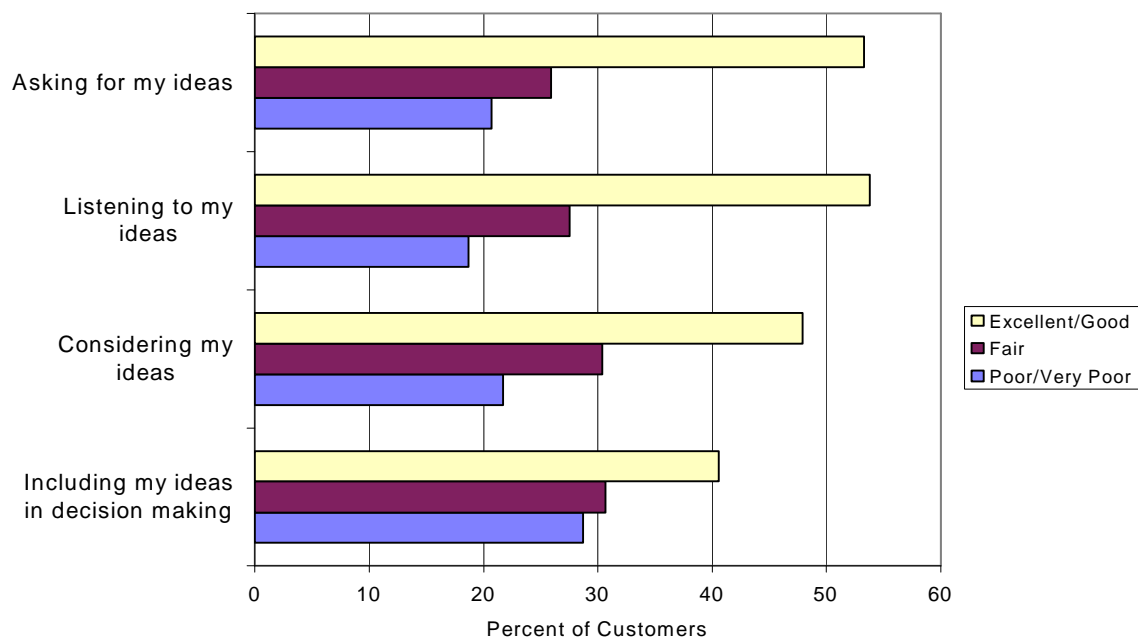


FIGURE 2 Customer’s Opinions on How Well Reclamation Does in Asking for, Listening to, and Considering Customer Ideas

You were asked a number of questions regarding how frequently you had contact with Reclamation, either at your or Reclamation's, initiation; and finally you were asked what single, most important improvement that we could make to improve our customer service. We received numerous helpful and thoughtful suggestions.

We found that you are interested in receiving information about our programs, with most of your interests in our water delivery and environmental programs, as well as our new initiatives. You want more personal contact with us and want to be involved in our programmatic decision making.

Significant insight was provided into how our staff interacts with you. We learned that contact with our Area Offices has become the primary way in which you deal with Reclamation, and that our employees are perceived as courteous, knowledgeable, helpful, and accessible. There are perceptions that many of our staff have more responsibilities than they can fulfill, hence, our timeliness in responding to your inquiries is a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

Figure 3 shows how you rated our performance using a rating method that designates a 3.0 as a fair score and a 4.0 as a good score.

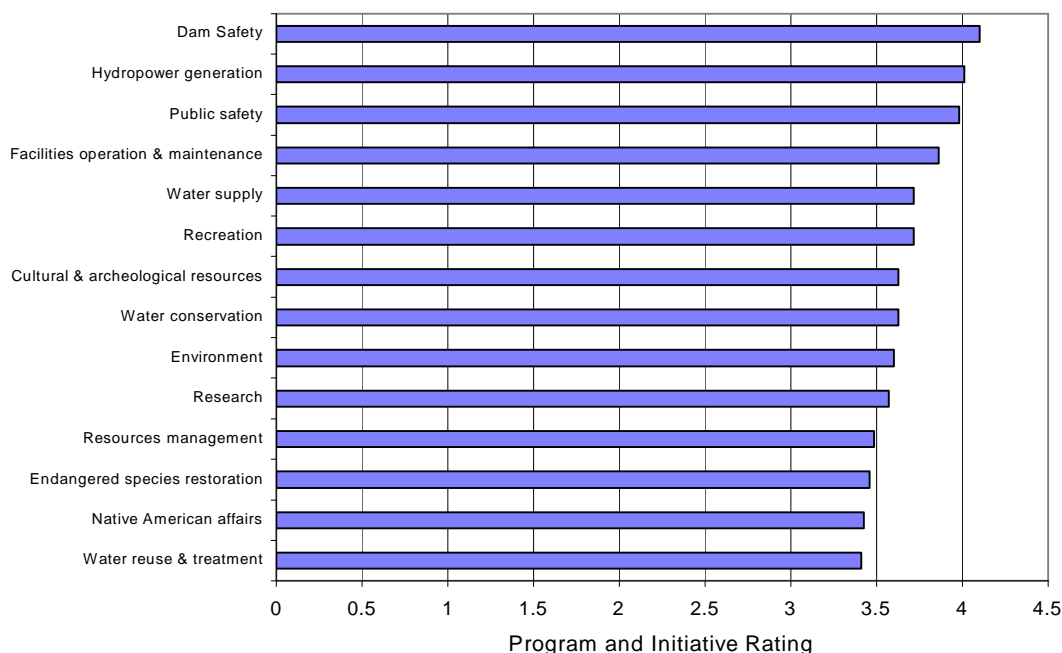


FIGURE 3 Customer Ratings of Reclamation's Performance in its Programs

A majority of you rated our performance fair to good in 14 program areas and rated us highest in our areas of dam safety, hydropower generation, public safety, water supply, and facilities operation and maintenance. You rated us lower, but still better than fair in our areas of responsibility, including environmental and cultural resources management, recreation, water conservation, and endangered species restoration.

We also learned that our three most valuable programs, from your perspective, are our water supply, water conservation, and environmental programs.

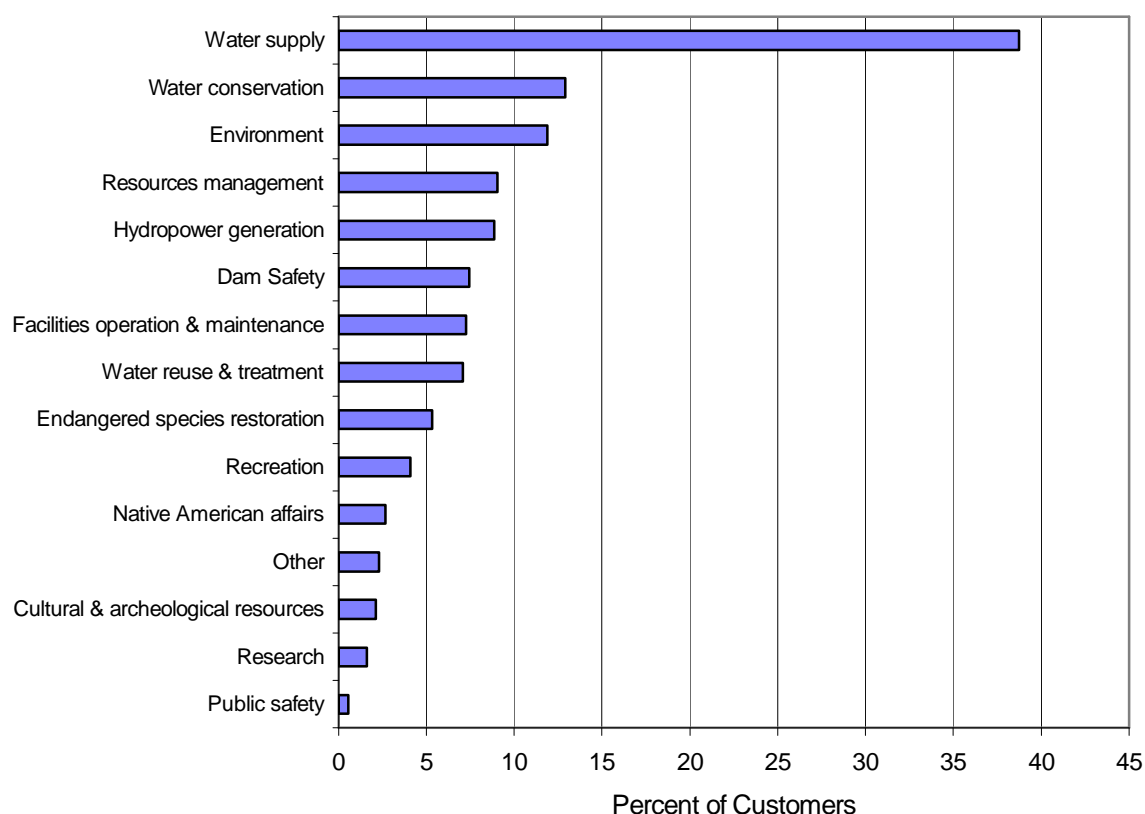


FIGURE 4 Value of Reclamation Programs to Customers

Where We Need to Improve

One of the purposes in conducting this survey was to identify those areas where you believe improvements are needed. While we are pleased that the responses indicated a favorable reaction to our customer service program, we are also concerned that a significant number of you view our service as less than adequate.

The survey included both open-ended and closed-ended questions that gave customers the chance to tell us how we could improve customer service. In certain attributes presented in the close-ended questions, from one-quarter to one-third of you believe there is significant room for improvement. Your responses provided constructive guidance for us that can be organized under eight themes:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ' Stakeholder Involvement | ' Management of Customer Information |
| ' Customer Relationships | ' Accessibility of Staff |
| ' Government Bureaucracy | ' Timeliness of Responses |
| ' Consistency | ' Reclamation's Changing Role |

Our challenge will be to identify stakeholder concerns, relative to those of customers, and determine how they can continue to provide meaningful input to our programs.

We appreciate knowing that you believe our staff is overworked and often bogged down by paperwork; and we appreciate recommendations that we operate in a more businesslike fashion. Paperwork burdens need to be addressed, and we need to use plain language.

You brought to our attention, and we agree we need to be consistent in the messages we send to our customers and we will be taking steps to improve consistency. We also understand your concerns about accessibility of staff. While modern communication technology has expanded our abilities to communicate, it has also introduced a degree of impersonal behavior that can be frustrating.

Your comments on timeliness were helpful. We know how important it is for us to be responsive to inquiries and to conduct our business at a faster pace. We are taking steps to address those concerns in our business dealings with you.

Finally, you commented on Reclamation's evolving role and mission. You expressed concern over what is perceived as a "turning away from our traditional responsibilities." Let us assure you, we remain committed to addressing all of our responsibilities.

Meeting Future Needs

Future initiatives to improve customer service will be structured around the following program initiatives:

- ' Develop and Implement a Customer Information Management System
- ' Conduct Benchmarking of Survey Results
- ' Review Business Practices

We are also surveying our employees on their understandings of customer service so we may develop and target customer service training as well as identify opportunities for improvement.